

DMAP Forest Assessment

In an effort to support sustainable forest management and reach more unengaged landowners, WDNR Foresters are assisting with the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) by:

- Attending site visits
- Conducting browse surveys
- Recording basic stand or point data (ex. timber type, BA, invasives presence, etc.)
- Recommending forest management strategies
- Assisting biologists with information for the management plan
- Reviewing and commenting on the completed DMAP plan for accuracy, etc.

The Forest Point Assessment form, which we use for DMAP site visits, is meant to be used at each individual assessment point (one form per point). Since we are generating data for WDNR Biologists to use in preparing a DMAP Plan, our goal is to give them representative information to use in the plan. We do not have time for forest reconnaissance of the entire property but the worksheet should allow us to discuss what we are seeing and what actions the landowner might want to take to improve their property.

Each point is meant to take approximately 15 minutes but depending on each point this will vary. Much of the information gathered at each point is based on casual observation, similar to a write up for a landowner walk through. To do this efficiently, the Forest Point Assessment form is provided to record observations. The following procedure is a guideline on how to plan for and conduct a DMAP visit:

1. Using property maps and/or air photos, plan to visit approximately 5 - 12 sampling locations, across the DMAP property or cooperative to assess forested habitat conditions. Sampling locations should represent the DMAP property or cooperative's major forest cover types.
 - a. Adequately space multiple assessment locations when they occur in a single forest type. Since this is not a cruise but rather a brief assessment, the number of total forest assessment locations will depend upon available time and priority of the landowner and WDNR Biologist.
2. Once you have reached a sampling location, GPS the location and if possible permanently mark the location (ex. marked/painted wooden stake, fiberglass pole, etc.). Noting the assessment location will create the opportunity to reassess the same area at a later time.
 - a. Though the permanent markers at each point would be ideal, these are really up to the landowner. Some may like the idea but others may resist.
3. At the sample point, take a photo in each of the four cardinal directions (e.g. four photos per plot location). The photos should record the date and time the photos were taken, preferably stamped in the photo. The purpose of the photos is to establish a baseline for future habitat assessment and management effectiveness.

4. Complete the Forest Point Assessment form. Since this is a simplified inspection, use best estimates for the data required. This assessment is more related to a "walk through" than a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP). The form has been updated for 2015 so make sure you have the right version.
 - a. Note: A FSP or MFL enrollment can and should be discussed and recommended for landowners as appropriate.
5. New to inventory work is a codified way of looking at deer browsing and its impacts. Browse impact is a function of the deer population and the amount of available food sources within the area surrounding the sample point. Using a 1/1000th acre plot (11.8' radius) or general observation, record browse impacts based on the following levels:
 1. **No browse evidence:** No visible browsing evidence
 2. **Low:** Light browsing evidence observed. [1-25% stems browsed]
 3. **Medium:** Browsing evidence observed but not common, seedlings present. [26-50% stems browsed]
 4. **High:** Browsing evidence common, hedging of stems, and/ or seedlings are rare. [51-75% stems browsed]
 5. **Very High:** Browsing evidence omnipresent OR forest floor bare, severe browse line. [> 75% stems browsed]
 6. **No Woody Palatable Vegetation Present:** No direct browse visible, but most woody plants under 2 meters are absent.

Level 6 is the hardest browse effect to observe, especially when deer have suppressed regeneration for extended periods of time. A prime example is a Pennsylvania sedge understory in a Northern Hardwood stand. If regeneration would be normally expected but is absent, lean toward level 6. If stand conditions may be suppressing regeneration (dense understory, etc.) lean toward level 1. The more property assessments you take part in, the better we will all get at teasing this one out.

6. Finally, provide comments and recommendations for this forest assessment location. Provide your professional advice on how the landowner can improve the quality of their forest and reach their management objectives.

At the conclusion of a property assessment the following can be used as a checklist of deliverables to our partner WDNR Biologists:

- Completed sample point data sheets
- Sample point photos
- Shapefile of GPS'd sample points
- Map of basic management units. This can be stands but this really depends upon the size of the property and what the WDNR Biologist is looking for.

As questions arise in planning, conducting, or packaging your assessment, please feel free to contact Brad Hutnik at 608-574-5642 or bradley.hutnik@wi.gov at any time.